

I am experiencing financial hardship and am having trouble caring for my pet. Are there low cost or free pet-care resources available?

If you are seeking help for your pet, there are organizations in Delaware that may be able to help with low-cost veterinary care and vaccinations, spay and neuter, pet food bank, and sheltering. The Office of Animal Welfare has a listing of [community resources online for pet owners](#).

How should I prepare for COVID-19 if I have a pet?

Take time now to make plans and prepare your pets in case you can no longer take care of your pets or have to go to the hospital due to COVID-19.

- Designate a trusted pet caregiver (family, friend, neighbor, colleague), who has a set of keys to your home, is familiar with your home and pet, knows your emergency plan, and has your contact information.
- Prepare pet care instruction documents for each of your pets with information on feeding, watering, health conditions, medications, etc.
- Make sure your pet is microchipped, the microchip is registered, and information is up to date. Your pet

should always be wearing a collar or harness with identification.

- Make sure your pet's veterinary care and vaccines are up to date. Organize your veterinary records so they are readily accessible.
 - In addition to making sure you have a supply of your own medication, be certain you have at least 2-4 weeks of your pet's medication.
 - Ensure you have an adequate supply of pet food, litter, and other consumable supplies.
 - Have leashes and crates/carriers available in case your pets need to be transported.
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Can I still adopt or foster an animal from an animal shelter at this time?

Yes. There is no evidence that any companion animals, including shelter animals, are a potential source of COVID-19 infection for people. Many animal shelters and rescues continue to look for foster care and adoption applicants.

Are veterinarians and pet supply stores open for

business?

Essential veterinary care, pet food retail, and animal shelter operations are all deemed essential services in Delaware and therefore remain open to the public. It is recommended to call a facility prior to arrival for special instructions or changes to hours of operation.

Can my animal be tested for COVID-19?

At this time, the State of Delaware, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) do not recommend routine testing of animals for the virus that causes COVID-19 in people. Veterinarians who believe an animal should be tested will contact state animal health officials, who will work with public health and animal health authorities to decide whether samples should be collected and tested.

What should I do if I think my animal has the virus?

Call your veterinary clinic with any questions about your animal's health. In order to ensure the veterinary clinic is prepared to evaluate the animal, the owner should call ahead and arrange the hospital or clinic visit. Make sure to tell

your veterinarian if your animal was exposed to a person sick with COVID-19, and if your animal is showing any signs of illness.

I am helping someone who is sick with COVID-19 by walking their dog/caring for their pet. How do I stay safe?

Always practice social (physical) distancing from the ill person, as well as from other persons when you're on a walk with a dog. Practice handwashing when entering the person's home. Avoid touching surfaces in the person's home as much as possible. Do not share food, kiss, or hug the pet, or allow the pet to lick you; and wash your hands before and after any contact with the pet and their supplies. You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils with the ill person or pet. After you attend to the pet and go home, wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds, and wash your clothes.

Can animals carry the virus that causes COVID-19 on their

skin and fur?

At this time, there is no evidence that the virus that causes COVID-19 can spread to people from the skin or fur of pets. Normal cleanliness and hygiene should be maintained for your pet. As a general precaution it is recommended that you wash your hands with soap and water after touching animals.

I've heard there are studies showing cats and ferrets becoming infected with the virus that causes COVID-19. Do I need to worry about my own pets?

Experimental studies conducted in a laboratory setting indicate that cats and ferrets might be able to be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 and transmit the virus to other animals. In a natural setting, it appears that it is rare that domestic animals are readily infected with SARS-CoV-2; however a few cases have been reported in the United States.

I heard there have been dogs and cats, and even a tiger, that have tested positive. Is my pet at risk?

A very small number of pets, including dogs and cats, have been reported to be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 after close contact with people with COVID-19. There have been no reports of pets becoming sick with COVID-19 in the United States. To date, there is no evidence that pets can spread the virus to people.

The first case of an animal testing positive for COVID-19 in the United States was a tiger with a respiratory illness at a zoo in New York City. Samples from this tiger were taken and tested after several lions and tigers at the zoo showed signs of respiratory illness. Public health officials believe these large cats became sick after being exposed to a zoo employee who was actively shedding virus.